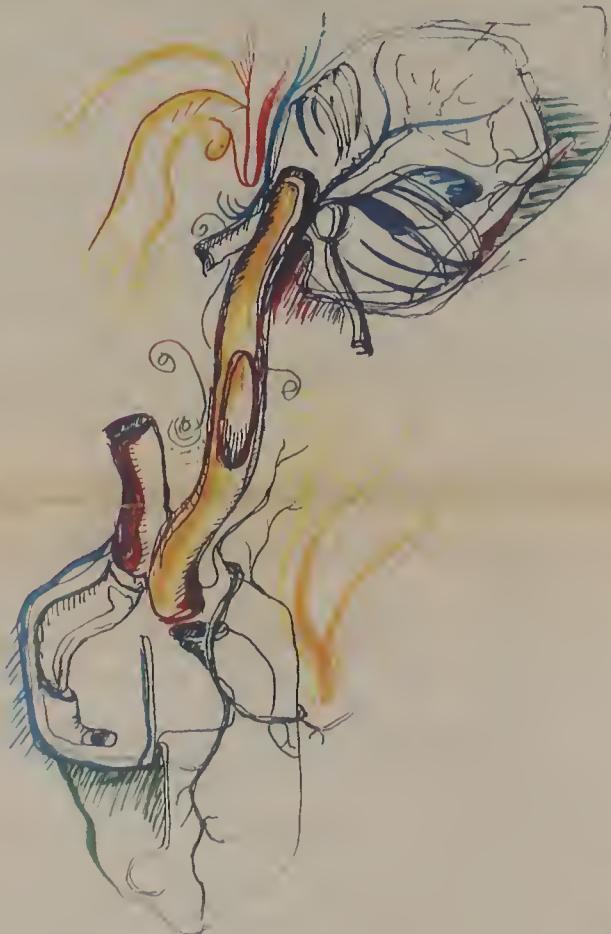


INNIS HERALD

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THE YEAR'S LAST ISSUE



THE INNIS HERALD

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MASTHEAD

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PRÉCIS

« *The answer is not uncomplicated* » (p. 2).

« *I have recently been informed of several interesting points on Kosovo's history* » (p. 4).

« *Because stories are only stories when they're new!* » (p. 6).

« *I realize it's harsh to wail on a book that someone put out themselves* » (p. 7).

« *** » (p. 8).

« *Mick certainly meets his fair share of Lilliputians and Brobdingnagians* » (p. 10).

« *With a polemical political film, one can easily disagree and dismiss the film* » (p. 11).

« *Until it answers the overwhelming demand to address Will Ferrell Studies, U of T cannot be considered a first-class educational institution.* » (p. 12).

« *For all those Juno worshippers reading this and seething...* » (p. 13).

« *And although these people were reared in a free American Society* » (p. 14).

NOTES

Cover artwork and the pieces on page 4 and 14 are by Rosy Rong.

The pieces Musings on Decrepitude and Not As a Stranger, on pages 3 and 15 respectively, are from Felix Kalmenson.

Photography on page 9 courtesy of Dan Epstein.

This is our last issue of the year. There are two distinct versions of the issue, which we encourage you to compare and contrast.

If you wish to be a part of the Innis Herald executive, please look on our website for application forms for all available positions.

The Innis Herald is usually published during the second full week of each month during the Fall and Winter terms. Meeting dates and deadlines may be found on our website.

All submissions are welcome.

Seven Centuries of Djordje Mantzios

I first met Djordje Mantzios amidst the flattening din of shouting long-faced dyspeptics (« gathered here today... »), that beardless, sedentary, might've-been-long-ago analogue of the morrigu of the fairy mound of Cruachan (of a time when the Cuchullin myths were far less anathematic than in today's inhospitable literary clime), rabblerousing a morose lot into transports of committed outrage, the interregnum adwoson of a crumbling empire (his empire), the last appointed garupush of Baba Nanak, Cauldron of Aegir fears of bald heroism, inofficacy, with all things, a cocklediddledawldoo ditty (« It won't be long [yeah] [yeah] »), shaping - converting the four mania principles tirelessly - a battalion of a very special kind of imbecile, why? (Why they ask? Why? Why indeed)

Well, the last time I spoke to him, I put him to the question; he smiled, discomposed, licked his parted, august lips, cocked his head to the wind the way the carrion crow sits, twitches, scratches methodically, murmured under stifled breath something about the « *deictic exploration of circumstance* », and then said he was off to the *Paidikseion* to burn it down. And even our first encounter, surrounded by men and women at his graven altar of mercy, the potpourri wisdom of Herr Mantzios, Lieu Llaw-gyfies, Ono Mastikos, György Manzo, *Grease-whistle Andy*, *Decimo Zeuse*, the « *farmer* », Reuben Rollowyn, Benson Bunion, the Indefinite Dyad, Mac Loizeaux, Gottfried Von Goering, Whitsun Coasbury - call him what you will - seemed superfluous given the provocative feeling that I knew him from before, before I first heard the wailing laments of mating wildebeest, before I recognized him as the Mulberry Bush Phantom, before - how could it be otherwise? - first (as in first formed) contact with the « *quantum bombshell* » and his exfoliating space-jalopy, quantized conveyance to the stars, ripping through the gluon field, frissons of hope, fear, nonpareil crystal apertures flashing like instantons, unfurling, gazing mass.

I take it for granted that familiarity with populist citations - a growing pain in Djordje's backside, the bane, the middling extravagances of wavering scholarship, with timorous allegations of nonbeing, metapersonality, paraliving, anthotaxy as to flowers what ethrenism is to my good friend - can lead only to an expeditious conclusion of the unfounded nature of these assertions, patently and guided by the principle of truth, the truth of mine-eyes-that-have-seen-the-glory, recognizing the tastelessness of conjectural guesswork, foundational empirical laws reigning supreme, *grasso modo*, what have you, the only tenable proposition worth the mental strain, crooked back, and risk of renal failure.

There is nothing remotely extraordinary in the circumstances that lead to the particular being that I came to know as Djordje Mantzios in the sense that he eats, he sleeps, he has, within reasonable limits of the word « *normal* », sexual relations, and can be killed without recourse to silver bullets, the *gæ bulta*, and other mythical miscellany salvaged from the world's

scrap heap of discarded ideas. The Djordje Mantzios who I met in my early years of campus matriculation, arranging an army of agitated, subspecies Neanderthal, producing second-order significations of the « *Djordje Mantzios* » identity, meme, mythic contagion, who successfully burned down a brothel that refused his patronage, is not the same as the George Mantzios of my boyhood who put the hurt on bullies entirely created from my imagination, the Herr Mantzios of my dreams who played me repeatedly The Kingston Trio records and ushered a golden age of oneric pleasure involving wildebeest, the Lieu Llaw-gyfies-like figure whose acquaintance I knew briefly, though an acquaintance so truncated as to mask his repeated associations with owls, arrows, and a man named Math, the actor Ono Mastikos, the neurosurgeon György Manzo, who successfully inserted dopamine-producing neurons extracted from aborted fetuses into Parkinson's disease patients, the Mulberry Bush phantom, a headless bogey that lived in the Spencer Davis Group's easy-bake oven from the summer of 1965 to the winter of 1968, et al. The varying degrees of isomorphism between these characters have not gone unnoticed, have not been left in the clutches of a deviant principle of complementarity, sibylline laws of non-contradiction.

Why then the deluge of explanations to justify his existence in explicitly literary terms?

Inoking the most popular of theories, Djordje Mantzios is able to inscribe in others the overbearing qualities of his identity through means akin to:

a) De Selby's atomic theory of molecule transfer
b) Slothrop's Pavlovian conditioning to 00000

c) The « *twineest* » of the Faber family

Perhaps it is hypocrisy that speaks these words in such a derisive manner, on the heels of a somewhat oblique reference to the morrigu, her transformations, her guiles; Thor's entry into Hymir's court to procure a cauldron fit for the gods; but I am not, in keeping with the inaugorative qualities that Djordje's very presence affords, in favour of accounting for the seven centuries of Djordje Mantzios in a manner that, out of sheepishness or a slavish debt to pedantry, both, resolves to privilege terms to the exclusion of others, of *Grease-whistle Andy* but not *Gottfried Von Goering*, discussing *Reuben Rollowyn* but ignoring *Benson Bunion*. Nor am I of the opinion that these men (and in some cases women) have all been the same person - Djordje Mantzios - though their generative relation is not to be contested (and certainly not necessarily a syntagmatic generation however it may manifest itself here, today, yesterday, in this space). Arguably, there are even those amongst the identifiable list of Djordje's that are not aware of each other; unaware, even, of the prime generator: there is, after all, no « *class P* » algorithm to measure his/its growth.

But how can I with confidence maintain that Djordje's propagation is not in the manner of molecule transfer, Pavlovian condi-

tioning, or simple reproductive capacity? My associations with him assuredly do not make me exempt from criticism or bequeath me with a knowledge bulwarked from shrewd, doubting analyses of rivaling Djordjean scholars.

The answer is not uncomplicated.

Djordje Mantzios' origins are literary, yes, absolutely, just not literary in the sense that his existence is somehow presaged by specific literary texts. In the same way that an author may assume voices, « *a variety of voices* » and « *subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy* », the voice of a protagonist, a narrator, the signatory of a legal document, Djordje Mantzios - the concept, not the person - is intradimensional in nature. Just as within the four operable dimensions an author is able to assume many voices within a text, throughout their body of work, creating and absorbing inconsistencies, relinquishing certain elements of selfhood for the immaterial transpositions of role-play, Djordje Mantzios is able to write himself in a lower dimensional narrative. At some point in the early forties, as record would have it, the life of Mac Loizeaux is obscurely chronicled by the Loizeaux family to local newspapers, picaresque adventures of the noble heart, timid approvals growing into mass swells of adulation; the mere visual resemblance to Mantzios is indisputable.

Had the comparisons limited themselves to within the Loizeaux family, the genealogy would have become characterized as the commonplaces of the genetic code. But the exact opposite happens; men and women across the world, at first imperceptibly, unremarked, ignored, fail to take notice of the tide of uniform behavior, mien, turns of phrases, preoccupations of a tortured, noncommittal « *writer* », recurring themes of pedantry, enclaves of militant dwarves armed with the wisdom teeth of Nazi officials, the eccezis of coded messages through a labyrinthine array of drainage pipes, the significance of the inverted penis, chattering exchanges of harmonic nonsense - all within the breadth of lives of a select few.

To return to the question I initially proposed: how am I certain that Djordje Mantzios is all of these people and none of them at the same time? That their existences cannot be sufficiently accountable by the diarrhoeal contours of socialization vibrating across man-made channels of human interaction?

Because Djordje Mantzios - *my Djordje Mantzios* - enduring the deictic exploration of circumstance, who attempted to corral men and women to socialize into his likeness (and failed), the Djordje Mantzios who was almost run over by Lloyd Gerson and who embodies and expresses the professed knowledge of his past and concomitant lives, who not only now enters my dreams plying « *M.T.A.* » and « *Greenback Dollar* » and liberally admonishes about the dangers of DBS but possess the ability to recite every film that Ono Mastikos has ever been in - because, this Djordje Mantzios is the autobiography writ large, the *noesis noetos* of Djordje Mantzios *qua* Djordje Mantzios, the living sign. ■

JEAN MARC AH-SEN



KOSOVO

OVER reading week I had the opportunity to witness firsthand Kosovo's declaration of independence. Thanks to Professor Robert Austin and the Student Experience Fund, ten lucky students (myself included) arrived in Pristina the day before it became the capital of a newly independent state. It was a tremendous experience, and we were honoured to have met with many interesting people, including representatives of various international organizations, students, Ministers, and even the President of Kosovo, Fatmir Sejdiu. By conducting interviews, going for dinners with stakeholders, and meeting so many people, we had the opportunity to hear various opinions regarding Kosovo's independence, the problems and obstacles it is currently facing, and its possible future as an independent/semi-independent state. Upon returning, I have discovered that many people in Canada have interesting opinions regarding Kosovo as well.

It must be noted that there seems to be a lack of knowledge regarding the area, despite the fact that the subject has been extensively covered in many newspaper articles, television shows, and other mediums. Several of my co-workers and friends were very puzzled when I returned from my week-long « vacation » as pale as I had left. Apparently they had believed that Kosovo was located somewhere in Mexico. I then had to explain not only that it was, until recently, part of Serbia, but also that Serbia and Siberia were not in fact the same place. I often gave up attempting to explain the situation once questions like « *But they were still part of the Soviet Union, right?* » « *What is Yugoslavia?* » and « *Is Serbia beside Portugal?* » were asked (ironically enough, asked by a Hungarian friend who refused to believe that Serbia is, in fact, next to Hungary).

This kind of ignorance in regards to politics and world events is both funny and sad. But at least these individuals do not purport to change other's opinions on a matter based on little or no information on the re-

gion. I have absolutely no problem accepting other people's opinions when they are different from my own, nor do I intend through this article to persuade anyone that Kosovo's independence was justified; I am simply expressing my frustration with those who attempt to force their position onto others, without being able to adequately debate the issue.

There have been various reasons given for the opposition to Kosovo's independence, some of which, as I mentioned earlier, are absolutely valid. For instance, the arguments that there are certain sites which have historical, cultural and religious importance to Serbs within Kosovo's territory, that the declaration is illegal under international law, that it may develop a dangerous precedent for other conflict zones. These are all relevant to the debate on recognition, and must be examined and weighed carefully in order for any judgment to be made. But those people who simply state « *Kosovo shouldn't be independent* » as their justification for attending protests, signing petitions, and declaring their position on Facebook, without being able to explain their reasoning for it, are ridiculous. I find it difficult to give credence to the opinions of those who are so ardent in their efforts to persuade Canada to reverse its stand on recognition, and yet are unable to name even one reason for their support. This is absolutely not limited to individuals from the Balkans; I have met various people of different backgrounds who are very adamant about a particular stance on an issue without quite knowing why.

The most frustrating individuals I have spoken with, however, are those who seem to invent their own version of history in order to justify their position. I have recently been informed of several interesting points on Kosovo's history which completely go against everything else that I have read. Apparently, there were nearly no Albanians in Kosovo until the early 20th century, when they began to move in on Serbia's territory, as part of their master plan to eventually be the majority in the region so that they could accomplish pre-

cisely what they did on February 17th, 2008. In addition, regardless of what any sort of « *census* » says, in reality the number of Serbs in Kosovo is far larger than what is commonly believed, and if, in fact, the Kosovar Albanians are a « *majority* » there, it is only because they moved in on Serbian territory and then proceeded to have far too many children. (It is true that birth-rates among Kosovar Albanians are much higher than that of ethnic Serbs in the region, however Albanians represent approximately 88-92% of the population, quite an overwhelming majority, and difficult its difficult to believe that only one century of baby-making can create that large a difference.)

Due to the way in which Kosovo is portrayed in the media, I almost did not apply for the trip. Thankfully I did, as otherwise I would have missed out on an amazing, and perfectly safe, experience. For a country « *run by narco criminals* » with « *no economic prospects* », as it was described by the Canada's former Ambassador to Yugoslavia in the Toronto Star, the Kosovo I visited was safe, almost overly-policed, and filled with very hospitable and friendly citizens. Granted, there are regions in Kosovo that certainly are not as calm as Pristina, but in general the portrayal of Kosovo in the media has been, in my opinion, overly discouraging.

The purpose of this rant is not to attempt to change anyone's mind or position regarding Kosovo. It is simply to encourage everyone to research and look into issues before accepting and endorsing someone else's position. By understanding both sides of any debate, one is better able to explain and justify a particular position, giving much more weight to that opinion than simply stating « *because I say so* ». A little additional research never hurts... unless of course it's exam time.

JESSICA POLIS





click/snap: six poems for Patrick Lane

*If you listen you can hear me.
My mouth is open and I am singing.*

LADY BY THE LAKE

She walked along the lake shore, holding up her dress.
The lake shown clear transparency, climbing up her legs.
She couldn't seem to shake it off, it sought out her shroud
Onward up and little down, it motioned with her shards.

She walked the water cautiously, not to loose her dress. The lake went quickly quicker, wanting to find her out. She couldn't seem to shake it off, it sought out her shroud.

She dipped her leg to splash it off, it wanted to become her.
The lake raveled back onto her, and so she felt her match.
Onward up and little down, it motioned with her shards.

She slipped her dress and dove right in, moving to become it.
The lake responded with delight, waving as she kicked.
She couldn't seem to shake it off, it sought out her shroud.

She held her breath and went down, searching out its core.
The lake grew dark in the deep, and darker in the deeper.
Onward up and little down, it motioned with her shards.

She kicked through on her plume, what was it that was clear?
The lake engulfed her brittle body, welcoming her descent.
She couldn't seem to shake it off, it sought out her shroud.
Onward up and little down, it motioned with her shards.

AFRAID AND ASHAMED

He stood there quiet and still
having heard about the woman's desperation.
She lay next to his girl, who was
only eighteen. She was younger
and had a man of her own,
who took her that day and took her.
He had her that day and he had her.
She told this to the man
whose bed she now lay in
and the man acted like a man,
at first, groaning inside as he
consciously recollected and tramped
his own desperation to let his groan be known.

ADVICE

My mouth is open and I am singing.
-Patrick Lane

BUT THIS URGE

*Admitting motion in the heav'ns, to show
Invalid that which thee to doubt it moved;
Not that I so affirm, though it seem
To thee who hast thy dwelling here on earth*

Paradise Lost, John Milton

Because Seraph is only Seraph wholly in the land
Where he pumps lambs that beat with his speech
Flying by and by, not conjugal but softly coaxed
With hushed caresses, not from harps but one nexus,
So it modulates him as if he were geode
And possesses what no-one could ever hold:
The little traces, specks, dust particles that make up
Tribes and rise, take flight, lifted in the blue
Of sky, but to soar beyond and steady they will go
Admitting motion in the heav'n's, to show

That the maker's men or boys are not the sole souls
Left from the fight or that the fight did not occur
Or if it did occur it was not fought only by men
At least not here on Planet Earth.
Because we're still going-to not getting-there.
Because of characters like Huck, who's inwardly opposed
Because Paul Newman hustles bills before bankers green.
Because even though we skirt sea and trace land
We are in full accord and that urge can prove
Invalid that which thee to doubt it moved;

Because stories are only stories when they're new!
Why bother with Raphael and the fables he strained
To teach: how can they help explain me to me?
Though cement they will be and as a worker
I lay bricks and my inner gardener looks
With a felt eye to plant the touch of truth.
Be I will and stand alone but very close
To other universes closed. Each to his own,
To walk away a while. Now, I resign and say
Not that I affirm though it seem

To me, it seems to be that this is the case
And each day let us pray ourselves and sing!
Not by duty to observe but in patience we all hold,
In the nations that we make and on the revolution
That we live, we shall spin and stand in clear roots.
Eyes gaze, while walking onward here on earth.
Through cities full of woes we can stand
Bigger as we fall if we make fierce from each fall,
Sweep leaves, seed trees, give pumpkin patches birth
To thee who hast thy dwelling here on earth.

A LONG TIME LONGING

We'd been friends a long time
The 9 AM class 3X a week
When each leaned at the other
Hoping to be noticed, but only so
Much of the time spent with that intent
There were also the books, or the lecture
Heard for an hour, circled through the day

Some days we'd have coffee after
Share the books we knew we could recite
We wanted the space of the lines to be
Known and felt - the way our airspace
Had feeling, that sounding effect rippling -
To show the sound of our pounding

DUTY AND DESIRE

Reading a story to you
trying to trace clear facts
I could be comfortable
connecting to you
you could be dreaming
somewhere, tracking something.
We are in the same room.
I've stripped all the muscle
a stimuli still pulses
we start talking
you stand in a flux
pushing desires to read, see, no, feel, away
revealing what is to be known
about yourself.
Afterwards we walk together
full strides as animals going
we stop, talk, stuck in-
decision's elastic bubble
till I smack the handicap door button.
and you salute, as you walk through.

MATT RUTCHIK



Hollywood North

JAKE

Babad's *Hollywood North*

Hollywood North is a look at Toronto's film industry through the eyes of Chris Burke, a young film student who lands a job as a marketing intern at a film production company. The novel chronicles his hijinks over four months as he progresses through his summer internship and tries to find a solution to the existential drift that is rumbling through his life. Chris is in the midst of several crises: he thinks he's unfit for the job, his love life is in shambles, he has no friends and his confidence is in a state of distress.

Babad moves the novel through convenient character sketches and sitcom plot. Babad's fiction offers no strength; the prose struggles constantly to find its roots. It's this feeling that is the hallmark of weak self-publishing. The prose in the novel constantly struggles to find direction, as if Babad is working out the issues of his novel and has forgotten to draft the work. This sense of directionlessness in the prose permeates on every level and infects all layers of the text. The novel should serve two elements – plot and character. The characters amble here – nothing happens in the book unless it is convenient to advance the plot. Characterization doesn't exist because everything just occurs so we can move from A to B to C.

The aimlessness makes Babad's style hard to discern. Since no voice seems to be flowing, the prose often reads messily. Instead of a voice, sometimes we'll find pastiches of style:

Chris could not help but be intimidated by this man. For starters, he was easily half a foot taller. Furthermore, he looked as though he had stepped out of a magazine.

This is where it reads as if the author's « essay voice » started to creep in. Babad struggles with establishing a voice even with dialogue. Just as the prose passages often contain unnecessary elements, there are poor attempts at characterization in the dialogue:

« Hey man, you can call me Jimmy ».
« Hi, I'm Chris ».

And the dialogue simply ends there. In an interview with *The Newspaper*, Babad claims to have wanted to craft a piece of work that aspired only to be entertaining, but what's the point of this? The coming of age story that he's trying to construct is interesting enough, but the lack of ability pulls you directly out of the work. The pace of the book usually moves quickly, but dialogue like this is an albatross, awkwardly getting in the middle of the work and jamming the words to a halt.

Throughout the book, Babad tries his hand at a subtle critique of office culture:

The American office has quickly become the newest source of satire. Why? Perhaps it's because it once represented the American dream. This dream has since been achieved, and perhaps all involved have realized that it's not all it was cracked up to be. Nowadays, it's the only place left for the masses of poor students with undergraduate degrees to retreat to when they realize that life is not going to hand them a job as a professional Bachelor of Art. Whether one struggles to enter the corporate world or simply falls into it, once inside all anyone can do is desperately try to find a way out.

The critique doesn't work. Babad is highlighting a very common philosophical thought, but that's all he's doing. There's no new insight being provided here, old arguments are simply being put on display. Again, we find a contrast in purpose. Babad wanted to create a comedic story, but the tone of this ruminative passage, which opens the book, drifts away from his goals.

What does the passage accomplish for the story? The sense of aimlessness pervades and prevents us from engaging with the story.

The dialogue is repetitive and strained, the prose meanders, and the work is a struggle for voice. First novels are often the struggle for voice, especially when the authors are this young, but this book suffers because the craft isn't there yet. When Easton Ellis wrote *Less Than Zero* (at 19), his monotone,

flatline style was brashly evident. He carried this and evolved it with *Rules of Attraction* and *American Psycho*. The bud of Baldwin's searing prose is evident in his first works, just as the scatterbrain nature of Mailer's prose is clear in *The Naked and the Dead*. I'm not suggesting we put *Hollywood North*, a novel aimed at entertaining, in the same category as these novels – but only to note that the bud of style and voice is always visible. In *Hollywood North*, it is too ambiguous; we can't tell if it's obscured by the shoddy craftsmanship or if it just doesn't exist.

In his interview with *The Newspaper*, Babad outlined his decision to self-publish, citing mainly that his desire sprung because agents refused to handle the work because it was too Canadian. The book is Canadian in the most basic sense – it takes place in Canada. It seems silly to blame the lack of a book deal on its Canadian content. I realize it's harsh to wail on a book that someone put out themselves, but the issue here is that Babad has shifted focus away from his prose and to its Canadian content. The novel wouldn't get published in its current form because it just doesn't work. It's not ready to be a novel yet – it reads as a first draft. Too much of the writing goes, stops, stalls, and forgets where it is. It's the novel as a concussion, woozy and blurred, not ready for anything.

Self-publishing is a venue full of artistic opportunity – there is no editorial mandate, no expectations, no line to tow. But it's a world full of pitfalls, especially for the writer, who will always struggle with the first book. This is evident here. The novel is too large for Babad to take on himself and the decision to cut out the middleman – the editor – doesn't pay off. Instead of pushing the limits of the novel and taking advantage of the opportunities that self-publishing provides, Babad uses it as a means to an end and accomplishes little.

ADNAN KHAN



FOUNDED

in 2003 by crate-diggers Tom Lunt, Rob Sevier, and Ken Slipley, the Numero Group aimed to provide convenient ways for collectors and casual listeners alike to have access to some of the most sought-after records in (non-)existence. Adhering to no set generic marker, the Group (eschewing negative modern connotations of the term « record label ») releases a wealth of styles under series monikers such as Eccentric Soul and Cult Cargo while often setting aside whole releases to focus on one particular label. For one example, their double CD engagement with the Twinlight label boasts itself as a « complete label history », including two tracks « only rumored to exist », at once testifying to the quality of their work and the space it inhabits, where rumored Twinlight tracks are discussed for years before some map is surely acquired, leading to booby-trapped jungle structures where near-death experiences are endured for the benefit of NPR listeners and West Coast DJs.

With a self-described library aesthetic, each Numero release comes packaged with extensive liner notes and original photos, sitting charmingly together on the shelf with their colour-coded, numbered spines - a collector joke not lost on the label, having just released a series of « no-hitter » trading cards featuring such Numero luminaries as Arrow Brown. The result has been a plethora of praise from both the staunchest of critics and cache of names. One release features a glowing quote from Neko Case on the package's sticker, and the group has just reached its 19th numbered release this month, which is saying nothing of the disco 12" series or the Twinlight 7" releases.

It was only a matter of time before this level of care and its warm reception lead to reissues of full albums. This past September saw the launch of the Asterisk (actually, simply *) imprint where the group pursued just such a project. Coming in mini-gatefold LP packaging, these first four CDs carry the same high watermark of packaging, also including illuminating liner notes rife with indispensable insights oftentimes from those involved in the original works.

The first release indicates the extent with which these releases are capable of going, featuring two recording sessions (*Appetizer* and *Soup's On*) of Connecticut rock outfit

Johnny Lunchbreak hitherto available only on the original acetate made by the band in 1974 and 1975, which received no further production or distribution until it was accidentally found in 2004. Pressed onto LP in a hand-numbered run of 300 copies by the man who found the acetate, this run was only scarcely more available than the acetate, which, he astutely notes, would be a coveted collector item if it was pressed on a private label 30 years prior. Asterisk's release greatly widens the distribution scope, while the recordings retain their loose, unpretentious charms. Shrouded in a Rolling Stones shadow, modern listeners will no doubt see a proto-Television-by-way-of-Jonathan Richman sound that is at once capable classic rock while still bristling with a (refreshingly) not completely realized creativity.

The Four Mints release brings things back to a more familiar Numero territory, as the soul group was featured prominently on the very first Eccentric Soul release: a survey of Columbus, Ohio's Capsoul label, for which this album was the only LP the outfit ever managed to release. Like the Lunchbreak release, *Gently Down Your Stream* curiously isn't an album in the sense that we've come to know; barely full-length, the original release is merely a collection of the group's singles amended with one left-over track. Asterisk upgrades this with an alternate take of one single, a rehearsal of another and the instrumental bedding for this rehearsal. That being said, the Four Mints are an incredibly strong group, their harmony-focused, laid-back 70s style being familiar to the most cursory understanding of soul music.

Rounding out the inaugural three releases and further signaling the breadth of the series is the self-titled release by folk group Propinquity. Like the Four Mints, Propinquity may be familiar to Numero listeners for their earlier appearance through Numero, here Carla Siicky's « And I A Fairy Tale Lady » on their folk compilation, *Wayfaring Strangers: Ladies from the Canyon*. Also like the Four Mints, this is another case where the group has only one album to their credit, but, as the genre may indicate, this is a far more conceptual affair than *Gently Down Your Stream*. Each track is the solo work of one of the members of the group, and, depending on your tastes, the album may earn further points

in its relatively austere presentation in the face of some of the more hippie-oriented fare associated with the genre. Overall, Propinquity's work fits very neatly into the current folk renaissance, especially the trend of discovering lost troubadours from decades past whose work extolled a return to pared down subjects or worldviews. This release also features the unearthing of two notable extra tracks, having never seen the light of day prior to this release.

A late release in the following November, the self-titled Boscoe LP is very much the high point of these releases. Long coveted as one of the rarest and (subsequently) most desired soul releases, the album from the Chicago group is notably (and understandably) the only of the four Asterisk releases to have the distinction of also being available on vinyl. Although a soul album, this is the farthest thing from a retreat in the Four Mints sound. Boscoe's brand is alternately pared down and psychedelic, minimalist vibes juxtaposed with bouncing traditional arrangements and free jazz explosions, carving a provocative sonic niche slowly over the course of the album (this certainly isn't a singles compilation). The lyrics add another uncompromising level. No words were minced in the overtly race-related spirituality, which differed from a considerable amount of standard, contemporary soul fare, although fitting perfectly with the concurrent efforts from fellow Chicagoans the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Sun Ra. *Boscoe* is the perfect candidate for Asterisk, an album in the complete sense of the word, whose outstanding level of playing and depth had far too long been languishing in obscurity.

While the nature of the project is such that one cannot expect the acquisition and release each month, if these releases are any indication, this will be a fruitful project for years to come. The addition of the Asterisk imprint to Numero is invaluable and, hopefully, indicative of a widening or sufficiently supportive audience interested in the physical act of listening to music - especially music that has suffered the needless bureaucracy imposed on the release of music for the past century by record labels, who, ironically, are now floundering with the great distribution equalizer, and the subsequently increasing abstraction - in production, distribution and ethical conception - of what music means. ■

CHRIS HERON





O Lucky Man!: « What's There To Smile About? »

THERE

are so many things to love about *O Lucky Man!*, the wonderfully madcap spectacle that can easily be considered British director Lindsay Anderson's masterpiece. First released in 1973, it continues Anderson's collaboration with Malcolm McDowell that began in 1969's *If...*. While that film is set in the stifling confines of a British boarding school, *O Lucky Man!* makes the logical progression to the outside world and all the wonders and dangers it has to offer. As a result, it is easy for younger viewers facing the delicate transition from school to life to relate to McDowell's iconic character that he plays in both films: Mick Travis. However, Mick seems to undergo a great change between films: while in *If...*, he is an anarchic rebel, he is drastically reshaped into an ambitious, capitalist go-getter in *O Lucky Man!*. Then again, it seems like Anderson would prefer to have his hero abruptly go from machine-gunning his classmates from the roof of his school in the former film's surreal climax to working as an Imperial Coffee salesman at the start of the latter without a hitch. Anderson was a filmmaker who liked to break the rules and provoke attention, and nowhere in his career is this more apparent than in *If...* and *O Lucky Man!*.

More than anything else, *O Lucky Man!* is a young man's film. Speaking as an adolescent male, it is hard not to share the wide-eyed Mick's youthful excitement as he takes to the road and begins his journey across 1970s England. It is a long path with many twists and turns, and as with Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon*, part of what makes the viewing experience so enjoyable is simply anticipating where our hero will wind up next. With this film, Anderson aimed to create an epic « in the classical, poetic sense of the term », meaning a spirited quest narrative in the tradition of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. Mick certainly meets his fair share of Lilliputians and Brobdingnagians as he travels to all corners of the country, and like Swift's tale, Anderson's is not without touches of social commentary. Along his way, Mick is aided by charitable innkeepers and employers, yet he is also betrayed and pursued by government agents, mad scientists, war profiteers and the wretched poor. If there is one lesson that he learns from his experiences, it is that the world truly operates according to Darwin's rule of survival of the fittest. Mick finds his own ways of getting through his var-

ious fixes, though often by little more than a scrap of chance. The first major turning point in the film comes when Mick is mistaken for a terrorist operative, captured and interrogated in a military facility. From then on, he goes from coffee salesman to man on the run, and it hits home to the viewer that this is a movie in which anything can happen at any moment. It is through this uncertain world that Mick travels, armed only with ambition, charm, a possibly magical gold suit and an invaluable piece of advice: « Try not to die like a dog! »

This film could have been made by Godard's goofier kid brother. It is often reminiscent of *Pierrot le fou* both in its road movie structure and, more particularly, its sheer defiance of cinematic conventions. One of its most prominent oddities is Anderson's usage of the same actors in multiple roles (most of whom also appear in *If...*). Not only does it demonstrate their considerable talents, but it also gives the film a communal feel. This is a harsh and unpredictable world, yes, but it is also Anderson's world, populated by a close-knit cast of his choosing (which includes Arthur Lowe, Graham Crowden, Mona Washbourne, Philip Stone, recognizable from his films with Kubrick, Christine Noonan, who looks like a British Chantal Goya, and a young Helen Mirren). Another touch that evokes Godard (specifically his 1968 film *One Plus One* AKA *Sympathy for the Devil* which features the Rolling Stones as they record the title song) is the reoccurring appearance of Alan Price and his band as they play songs written for the film onscreen, adding a sort of musical commentary to Mick's exploits. This is wonderful music that brilliantly complements the film's action, but could easily be enjoyed on its own (this soundtrack currently resides on my iPod and will continue to indefinitely). Price's work ably illustrates how much of the film's greatness is owed to the gifted individuals who comprise it. Just as his music gives the film its true voice, Malcolm McDowell surely gives it its heart. It is impossible to imagine *O Lucky Man!* without him – and this can be taken quite literally, as it was McDowell who proposed the idea of another film after *If...* to Anderson and contributed an initial script based on his own experiences as a coffee salesman. David Sherwin, who penned *If...*'s screenplay, was brought back to fine-tune McDowell's ideas and gave the film

the same touches of absurd humour and sharp satire that made the earlier film such a delight to behold. Yet it was Anderson who had the skill to unite these separate components into a coherent whole that, though it clocks in at three hours, not only never feels long or dragging, but is compulsively rewatchable.

I sometimes see Michelangelo Antonioni referred to as the Italian answer to the French New Wave. Would it be too much to call Anderson the English one? I don't think so. Though he may have been lacking the youth of the French directors, he displayed just as much fresh innovation and rebelliousness as any of them in the two *Mick Travis* films he made in the late 1960s and early '70s (there is also *Britannia Hospital* from 1982, though it is considered inferior to its predecessors). Mick could even be seen as Anderson's equivalent to Truffaut's *Antoine Doinel*, though McDowell brings a devilish charm and sense of confidence to his character that Jean-Pierre Léaud's wide-eyed youth was always lacking (save for a few moments of inspired boldness sprinkled throughout Truffaut's five *Doinel* films). However, despite the similarities between the two coming-of-age sagas, Anderson truly belongs in a class of his own with *O Lucky Man!* as the greatest demonstration of his filmmaking abilities – and if there ever was a time to discover (or, for established Anderson fans, rediscover) those abilities, it would be now. Three of Anderson's films have recently been reissued in pristine transfers onto DVD: *This Sporting Life*, his first feature starring Richard Harris, *If...* (both released by the Criterion Collection) and *O Lucky Man!* itself. After hearing and reading so much about the *Mick Travis* films as the best samples of McDowell's work besides *A Clockwork Orange* (which too often overshadows the rest of his career), it was both a great relief and genuine pleasure to discover that those accounts were completely justified. As a first-time viewer, I found *O Lucky Man!* to be a blissful movie-going experience with the kind of energy, heart and imagination that is hard to come by in films made these days, and I'm thrilled that such a film now has the opportunity to be discovered by new audiences years after its creation. « What's there to smile about? » Plenty – just give this film a look and see for yourself. ■

MARC SAINT-CYR

Kinopolitik: Politics of a Visual Essay

AS part of the University of Toronto Film Festival's *Spot Light on Cinema Studies Students* night, Daniel Neuhaus' *Kinopolitik: Vanguard of the Cold War* shows signs of maturation beyond the primitivism that is usually associated with student films. Realistically speaking, student films share features that are understandably inevitable given their situation: lack of funding, lack of personnel and essentially lack of experience. With a budget of less than \$1500, personnel of mostly other film students/filmmakers, and a lot of patience in the editing room, Neuhaus capitalized on the most meaningful and rewarding aspect of film – cinema as personal expression.

Kinopolitik reads like a film essay. That is not to say it is lacking in visual sophistication; on the contrary, Neuhaus' thorough understanding of the medium confidently translates on screen. Criticizing Cold War politics is a lot to take on, and so is examining the media's role in it. However, *Kinopolitik* does not fall into the trap of blind narrative recreation of historic events nor is it a documentary in the strict sense of the word; rather it is a visual articulation of one student's personal interpretation of the war, its resulting propaganda politics and its omnipresent legacy. The camera and its transformative power becomes the crux of the film. During the Cold War, like almost everything else, it becomes a war-serving machine in its ability to sustain an illusion of an on-going war. Camera has become independent of personal expression – it has become a mass ideological weapon.

Forgoing narrative for an essay-like structure, the film becomes much more effective in conveying an interpretation of media's incorporation and subsequent appropriation into the Cold War's propaganda politics. Significantly, the film appears to be a propaganda film; in utilizing the formal aspects of these propaganda films the film becomes critical of

them. Narrative is thus replaced by a collage of found footage and news reportages that are punctuated with staged war sequences while a female voice over narrates history.

During the film's opening credits, we see what we presume to be a reporter looking through his camera. Filmed in a black void, the reporter becomes our main focus; images of what the reporter is filming are imposed on him as though he is a screen. From there on, the film takes the form of collage of found newsreel footage and staged footage intercut with intertitles emphasizing the film's essay-like structure. Supposedly taking place in the future, the staged footage at times resembles and blends into the archival found footage, but at times it stands apart from it, suggesting the lingering effects of the war beyond our present and into the future.

Essentially a collage, *Kinopolitik* relies heavily on editing. The staged footage is filmed using various camera types: 35mm still camera, super 8, 16mm, MiniDV digital and VHS. Making no attempt to hide its construction, signatures of each medium are literally made visible in the footage, notably in the pixelated digital footage or the black strip at the bottom left corner of the 16mm footage. Period piece cameras – such as the Arriflex ST and the 16mm Soviet K-3 – are used alongside more recent cameras – namely, the MiniDV – which, when edited along-side 35mm stills and 16mm footage, produce the jarring effects akin to guerrilla reportage. Shots of soldiers holding guns are abruptly edited with shots of reporters holding cameras. As the film progresses, the line between soldiers and reporters is blurred; guns transform into cameras in the hand of the soldiers while cameras transform into guns into the hand of the reporters. As the reporters become more and more aggressive as they wield their cameras as soldiers wield their guns the editing

becomes more rapid, explicitly confirming the function of the camera as a machine of war. An intertitle reads: Soviet Propaganda Machine is Deployed, cut to a camera on a tripod standing still, cut to archival footage of soldiers marching. The soldiers are literally put in front of the camera and not vice versa. « In the past a photograph said: what appears before you was in front of the camera. In the future a photograph will say: what appears before you was placed in front of the camera », says the narrator. Tellingly, at some point in the film a soldier and a reporter are seen in silhouettes posing; a soldier is seen posing for the reporter, a scene that speaks to the amount artificial watered-down information that is presented by the media, recently the topic of Clint Eastwood's *Flags of Our Father*.

In its uncompromising dealing with politics (of a controversial and over-exploited subject as the Cold War), beginning with « I remember », *Kinopolitik* is first and foremost a personal political film, not a polemical political one. With a polemical political film, one can easily disagree and dismiss the film. Adding one's own personal agenda to it, however, makes the film much more engaging. To harp back to its visual sophistication, *Kinopolitik* mainly thrives on visual cohesion. Editing can make or break a film. A closer look at *Kinopolitik* reveals the precision with which these images were put together. It would seem that the subject of *Kinopolitik* is more suited for an essay; however, and as cliché as it may sound, if a picture speaks louder than words, imagine how powerful a film could be.

Kinopolitik ultimately creates a perfect amalgam between Film Studies and Film Production. ■

ROLLA TAHIR

A Pretty Funny Joke: The Popcorn Trilogy: Sign of the Times

Sign of the Times is, hands down, one of the wackiest (and almost the only narrative) films at the CINSSU night of the U of T Film Festival this year. It is much better than *Too Dangerous*, which wasn't nearly as good as *Kinopolitik: Vanguard of the Cold War*, which was far better than *Keep Moving*, which was not as funny as *Sign of the Times*, which was better than everything else we have seen up to that point—except maybe *The Engagement Party*, which everyone saw but nobody remembers because no one could recognize anyone in that film.

In *Sign of the Times*, the film's hero (Peter Kuplowsky) is an employee in a local theatre (shot on location at Bloor Cinema), but thanks to a lousy boss (Nigel Agnew), the film sows a discord between the two (started by the fire from his lighter). Director Robin

Sharp starts *Sign of the Times* by whisking us through an immediate « who's the boss » sequence, and doesn't slacken much once the real tale starts—in the film's been trimmed to the quick (a little less than 5 minutes runtime). The bespectacled hero tears apart his boss' order and ventures off into putting up the « sign of the times » on the billboard of the cinema, which says « Fuck You, Nigel! » (This is the best sequence ever! You can literally still see people walking on the street/cars moving on the roads as the sign is up). Kuplowsky, though, is appealingly human/mischiefous (partly because I know the guy) and is ready to break into *Footloose* dancing as he jumps up and down after putting up the sign. Some acknowledgement of the romance between him and his co-worker is faintly present and adequately handled. The witty and unexpected

twist at the end is a big joke that shifts from the coddling of Peter's self-esteem to Nigel's cautionary chiding of Peter's potential love interest (the impeccably enthusiastic Joey) while she « comes in » Nigel's office.

Sign of the Times, written and directed by Robin Sharp (I personally think he can fly!), is my audience choice for the night. As for Sharp's comedic moments (overshadowing each frame with curios), they demonstrate his use of sight gags, timing and style about until you see the credits, and then you wish it would last longer! For a director this young, it's not that easy to handle a short comedy film, but for me, it's a pretty funny and lighthearted film to laugh at. Not particularly thought-provoking, but definitely a lot of fun. ■

CARSON CHOW

He's Kind of a Big Deal: A tripartite dramaturgical analysis of the Ferrellian filmic œuvre

UNIVERSITY

College Dublin's Literary and Historical Society bestows its James Joyce Award on individuals who have contributed significantly to and displayed excellence in their field of human endeavor. Notable recipients include linguist/philosopher Noam Chomsky, civil rights activist Rev. Jesse Jackson, former UN weapons inspector Hans Blix, and celebrated novelist Bill Bryson. On January 23, 2008, the prestigious award went to its most worthy recipient to date, esteemed laughologist John William Ferrell. The 40-year-old writer and thespian orated to an audience of thousands, describing his deep affinity with the college's most renowned graduate. « James Joyce spent a lot of his life living outside of Ireland », he explained. « I too have spent a lot of time living outside of Ireland ». Throughout his magnanimous acceptance speech, Ferrell demonstrated a profound understanding of the award's significance. « As I perused my leatherbound volumes of Ulysses, Finnegans Wake, Dubliners, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, standing in my mahogany library, a lot of feelings ran across my mind », he reflected eloquently. « Like: Damn, I should have read these books ».

Since moving from the small screen to big screen over ten years ago, Will Ferrell has cemented his status as a comedic genius. Why, then, was the Literary and Historical Society the first academic institution to recognize him as such? Though he has displayed considerable writing, producing, and acting talent in his film roles, Will Ferrell has garnished little scholarly attention. The Film Studies program here at the University of Toronto offers courses in such pointless topics as Quebec Cinema, and we have an entire department devoted to the preposterous study of East Asia, but not a single course on Will Ferrell. The man is sorely and bafflingly neglected by scholars – but no longer. Finally, here in U of T's most progressive, cutting-edge student newspaper, Will Ferrell will receive the attention he so dearly deserves – nay, demands.

Ferrell's willingness to take on daring, controversial roles makes him an inspiration to future generations of entertainers. He wisely discriminates when it comes to co-stars, insisting on working only with the best: Ben Stiller, Owen Wilson, Vince Vaughn, and Baby Pearl are just some of the Hollywood heavyweights with whom he has collaborated to make stunning masterpieces. In the rare instance that he ends up sharing screen-time with someone mediocre – such as Emma Thompson in 2006's *Stranger Than Fiction* – it only serves as a chance for Ferrell's star to shine all the brighter. In the same way that he insists on quality co-stars, Ferrell will play only the most unique roles. In no way are any of his characters remotely similar to one another. Ferrell is a brilliant artist who chooses roles that showcase the diversity of his talent. When Ferrell undertakes a role, he becomes his character, delivering nuanced performances that resonate in the filmgoer's consciousness despite their ostensible subtlety.

An academic analysis of Ferrellian

film roles requires structure, which is difficult to impose considering the sheer vastness and breathtaking genius of his œuvre. For the sake of clarity, however, one can divide Will Ferrell's characters into three different but equally compelling categories as follows.

1. The Self-Aggrandizing Blowhard

Ferrell's most memorable characters usually play the role of the lovable hero, which fits perfectly with his real-life persona. Examples:

Chazz Michael Michaels in *Blades of Glory*. Michaels, an « ice-devouring sex tornado », gets in a fight with rival figure-skater Jimmy McElroy (Jon Heder) that causes both men to be banned from the sport for life. Things seem hopeless until the two realize that they can team up as the first man-double team. They overcome all obstacles, including an evil brother-sister duo, learn the value of friendship and teamwork, and win the championship.

Ron Burgundy in *Anchorman: The Legend of Ron Burgundy*. Ron, the #1 news anchor in San Diego, loses his job to the smart and sexy Veronica Corningstone (Christina Applegate). Things seem hopeless until Veronica goes missing and Ron gets called back to report the biggest story of the year. He overcomes all obstacles, including homicidal news teams from rival channels, learns that men and women can work together successfully, and gets his job back.

Ricky Bobby in *Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby*. Ricky, a champion NASCAR racer, gets in a traumatizing and humiliating car crash while racing his rival, gay French Formula One racer Jean Girard (Sacha Baron Cohen). Things seem hopeless until Ricky's estranged father returns to coach him. He overcomes all obstacles, including his hot wife leaving him for his best friend, has a re-match with Girard and proves himself to be the world's best racecar driver.

Jackie Moon in *Semi-Pro*. Jackie, owner, coach, and starting power forward of the Flint Tropics, is faced with the prospect of losing his basketball team when he is told that only four ABA teams will merge into the NBA and all the others will dissolve. Things seem hopeless until he trades the team's washing machine for Ed Monix (Woody Harrelson), who teaches the team how to work together. They overcome all obstacles, including a wrestling match with a bear, and Jackie Moon becomes Assistant Commissioner for the NBA.

2. The Eccentric Supporting Character

Ferrell delivers stunning, memorable performances regardless of how little screen-time he has in a film. Examples:

Chaz Reinhold in *Wedding Crashers*. Chaz lives with his mom and crashes funerals to pick up sad, horny ladies. He is a legend and inspiration for the

film's main characters.

Big Earl in *Starsky & Hutch*. Big Earl has information pertaining to Starsky and Hutch's drug investigation, but will only give it to them in return for homoerotic entertainment.

Franz Liebkind in *The Producers*. In their zany scheme to make money off of a failed Broadway show, Bialystock and Bloom choose a script called « Springtime for Hitler » written by Franz Liebkind, who also plays the title character.

Mugatu in *Zoolander*: a fashionable supervillain who tries to brainwash an innocent supermodel to kill the Prime Minister of Malaysia so he can continue using child labour.

3. The Downtrodden Everyman

Will Ferrell's portrayals of ordinary people show just how extraordinary an actor he really is. Examples:

Protagonist in *The Landlord*. In this short film, Ferrell plays a destitute man who endures harsh abuse from his alcoholic landlady, Baby Pearl.

Steve Butabi in *Night at the Roxbury*. Steve and his brother are seen as too dorky to get into the hottest club in town, and struggle endlessly against society's cruel demands in order to achieve their goals.

Harold Crick in *Stranger Than Fiction*. Harold is a dull IRS officer who awakens one fine morning to discover that an omniscient narrator's voice has invaded his mind and is planning to kill him.

Frank "The Tank" Ricard in *Old School*. Frank's controlling wife tries to stifle his personality. He escapes his unhappy marriage by living with friends, who go through trials and tribulations to keep their fraternity together.

Blundering ignoramuses might accuse Will Ferrell of being type-cast, but as the evidence above illustrates, each of his roles is radically divergent from the others. It is an absurdity and an injustice that the University of Toronto has not devoted a single course to this important subject, let alone the entire department that it so justly deserves. Until it answers the overwhelming demand to address Will Ferrell Studies, U of T cannot be considered a first-class educational institution. ■

CHRISTINE
CREIGHTON



Time to Shine:

How the Indie Film Has Changed Since Entering the Spotlight

WHEN the nominees for the 2006 Academy Awards were announced, more than a few people were surprised by *Little Miss Sunshine*'s appearance as one of the Best Picture contenders. Yet one year later, *Juno* seemed to make less of a splash in the same category, and some even suspected it to walk away with the gold statue in the event of the year's two best movies (*No Country For Old Men* and *There Will Be Blood*) splitting the vote. I wasn't concerned about that happening so much as I was intrigued by the Academy's newly-adopted attitude of acceptance towards off-beat independent films. So often in the past, the only real credit indie movies would receive from the Academy would be a nomination in one of the screenplay categories (without any hope for a win, of course – in these cases, the nomination is the award). This fate has befallen excellent films such as *American Splendor*, *Ghost World*, *The Royal Tenenbaums* and *The Squid and the Whale*, all of which bear strong talents in other areas such as direction and acting that they are more than worthy of the additional nominations that *Juno* and *Little Miss Sunshine* received. In terms of actual Oscar victories, the Best Original Screenplay and Best Adapted Screenplay categories have time and time again proven to be the safe havens of respect and victory for the indie movie. Regardless of how the odds looked in other categories, films such as *Pulp Fiction*, *Good Will Hunting*, *Lost in Translation*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Sideways*, and most recently *Little Miss Sunshine* and *Juno* were all more or less surefire bets for their Best Screenplay victories. However, with this recent trend of indie films gaining more ground in the important categories each year, could it be possible that a *Juno*-type little-movie-that-could will take the big prize before long? Perhaps, but only time will tell. However, what I find to be truly ironic about this situation is how, while indie movies are gaining more and more recognition, they also seem to be deteriorating in originality.

One of the things that struck me about both *Juno* and *Little Miss Sunshine* is how they seemed to be treading over ground already covered by their predecessors in the indie movie game. This feeling can be sensed from extraneous details littered throughout the films that are quite small, yet call so much attention to themselves that they feel tacked-on for the sake of giving the movie its indie status. The perfect examples I have in mind are Paulie Bleeker's orange Tic-Tacs in *Juno* and the cleverly-named Dwayne Hoover's vow of silence and devotion to Nietzsche in *Little Miss Sunshine* (though exception can be granted to Dwayne's vow of silence, as the moment in the film when he breaks it is quite poignant). Such traits feel too much like pale imitations

of Harold's fixation with death in *Harold and Maude*, Benjamin Braddock's new scuba diving suit in *The Graduate*, Max Fischer's presidency over the bee-keeper's society in *Rushmore* and Enid Coleslaw's inventive wardrobe in *Ghost World* – all of which I felt were more adequately used to flesh out their characters' personalities than similar elements in the more recent films. These little add-ons can be fun and amusing, but if used improperly, they can also add a sheen of trite artificiality that clashes with the more genuine and heartfelt moments that these films exude. Wes Anderson is an exception to this rule because quirkiness and artificiality are used so enchantingly by him that they have become important defining qualities of his distinct cinematic style.

A predecessor to *Juno* that is in many ways superior to it is 2001's *Ghost World*. It too focuses on an adolescent girl's journey to maturity within the enclosure of her suburban community, yet it is also far more streamlined in its character development and writing. In that film, it is clear that every detail is important for the establishment of the bitter heroine Enid, her best friend Rebecca and their confining home town. Consider the usage of extras in this movie, which in itself is a subtle stroke of genius: outside of five or six characters, everyone merely seems to serve the purpose of filling space, existing on the margins of the viewer's senses. However, these characters are crucial to the setting of *Ghost World*; their bland faces, moronic remarks and sheep-like docility perfectly set the tone of painful mediocrity and all-out lameness that makes this community so agonizing for the main characters to live in. It is an enigma that I as a resident of the suburbs can all too easily relate to and recognize. *Juno* pulls this off to some extent, but not nearly as totally or smoothly as *Ghost World* does. Instead, its world is composed of certain details that, like the character quirks, often feel thrown in. *Ghost World*'s Norman, ever perched on his bus stop bench, is a crucial symptom of the film's community, representing the combination of melancholia and naivete that is inflicted upon every inhabitant. The schools of red- and gold-clad joggers that are peppered throughout *Juno*, on the other hand, merely serve as charming backdrop fixtures and do little else for the film.

A key distinction to make between these two films is that *Ghost World*'s intensely strong sense of place does not stem from one principle element, but instead is subtly constructed by many working at once (the terrific performances, the hands-off, just-so cinematic style, the strong script by Daniel Clowes and Terry Zwigoff). *Juno*, on the other hand, possesses a single component that often overshines (and consequently hurts) the rest of its mise-en-scene: its sometimes-catchy, sometimes-annoying dialogue. Some film scripts are criticized

for being too "writerly"; at certain points, this criticism applies to Diablo Cody's screenplay in spades. Quentin Tarantino writes the kind of gold-standard dialogue that is brilliant in and of itself, but comes across as terribly juvenile when imitated by lesser writers (for examples of this, see any student-made film featuring hit men). Cody pulls off a similar type of chatter in a style that is distinctly her own, but there are moments (such as the convenience store scene at the beginning of the film) when dialogue that should be believable comes across as artificial and seemingly cobbled together from dozens of teenagers' blog entries and MSN conversations (which, while they could potentially offer inspiring source material, do not a great screenplay make).

For all those *Juno* worshippers reading this and seething (or at least wrinkling their brows) at my words, please believe me when I say that I am not dismissing the film completely. While there seems to be a love-it-or-hate-it divide among the people who have seen *Juno*, I am one of a select few who fall in-between. I obviously don't see it as the heaven-sent slice of perfection that some make it out to be, but it does have lots of heart that I couldn't help but be charmed by while watching it. Its main characters comprise a well-drawn, flawed bunch of people who undergo many changes (in terms of both maturity and the viewer's trust in them) throughout the course of the film in a way that is fascinating to watch. Yes, I liked *Juno*, and it's highly possible that I'll see it again when it comes to DVD and even learn to forgive some of its more contrived bits. The film just seems to indicate how the public's gradual acceptance of indie films has had a double-edged effect on what can now be classified as the indie film genre. These movies are finally getting the sort of recognition reserved for more mainstream films, but at the same time, they are becoming more standardized and formulaic. I only hope that there will be Oscar love further down the road for a film less like *Juno* and more like *The Squid and the Whale*, which throughout its entirety contains as much genuine emotion and honesty as the former's best parts, but without carrying the tell-tale signs of indie clichés. When the next little-movie-that-could comes out, how many pop culture references will it contain? How many identifiable, tacked-on quirks? Most importantly, will it need all that to strike a favourable cord with audiences? ☀

MARC
SAINT-CYR

A View from the Right: SNCC and the Reds, or « There are as many Communists in the Civil Rights Movement as there are Eskimos in Florida ».

IT has been apparent for quite some time that civil rights movements are susceptible to penetration by numerous ideological perverts of the far left if only because they dote on the usage of such emotionally charged terms as "civil rights" and "equality", while desiring to subject the members of the polity to the worst possible form of equality, that of communist slavery.

Numbers of these members are leaders of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee. And although these people were reared in a free American Society, and taught to revere the due process of law-their ultimate loyalty rests with Marxism. These people are utilizing the American Negro's struggles as a matter of expediency-for the purpose of establishing a Marxist America.

The spread of Communist influence throughout SNCC can readily be appreciated by the following facts (paraphrased from the Toronto Daily Star, 9/4/65):

1. Arthur Kinoy and Morton Stavis are two SNCC lawyers who are also active members of the Communist-front National Lawyer's Guild. Both men have participated in the defense of various Communist organizations, notable the United Electrical Workers which was expelled from the C.I.D. in 1950 due to its Communist affiliations.
2. Ella J. Baker, a prominent SNCC adviser, has discussed the feasibility of an alliance of labour with civil rights at a V.E.W. convention.
3. A major SNCC rep., Reginald Robinson, was present at the proceedings of the Moscow World Youth Forum in Sept., 1964.
4. The Souther Conference Educational Fund (SCEF), a Communist sponsored and supported organization, has given financial aid to SNCC.
5. SNCC officials have consistently endorsed the National Guardian-a pro-Chinese Communist publication.
6. John Lewis, SNCC's national chairman, has stated that he OPENLY WELCOMES COMMUNISTS INTO THE MOVEMENT.
7. James Forman, a SNCC strongman, a known radical of the far left, has forsaken his American upbringing and has "drifted further away from the mainstream of American society."

It is extremely doubtful that SCEF can become an exponent of the Republican system-even if it expels its Communist members, the Communist influence has penetrated too deeply. It appears that the SNCCite ---- Leftist will continue to perform at childish sit-ins and marches. It also appears that the Marxian liberal will continue to chip away at the very foundations of American society (which, to their chagrin) has managed to remain intact, not to mention prosper, for over one hundred and eighty-five years.

HART
BROUDY



